

[!\[\]\(a3ea015cc5581cad732d1eb81613fe7b_img.jpg\)](http://www.mondo-video.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/5404339015_33444c5a961.jpg)
The Mondo Film & Video Guide Interview With Chris Sarandon

Conducted By: Mondo Justin

Mondo Film & Video Guide Editor

When I was 10 years old I watched a film for the very first time on the Rhonda Shear hosted USA Up All Night! show called, **FRIGHT NIGHT.** Tom Holland's film scared the crapola outta me then, and has since been one of my all time favorite films. The justification of this statement, being that the film featured the amazing and hypnotizing performance of Chris Sarandon as 'Jerry Dandrige'. The most frightening vampire I had ever seen in my life on film.

While Sarandon has carved himself a career long niche with the aid of the vampire classic, he's also given several other amazing performances throughout the course of his thirty year career that are equally note-worthy as well as being simply must see.

Sarandon started his film career BIG, being cast as the character of 'Leon' in the 1970's classic, Sydney Lumet New York City epic, **DOG DAY AFTERNOON.** The performance would earn Sarandon an Academy Award nomination. From here, Sarandon would move on to the controversial role of rapist 'Gordon Stewart' in Lamont Johnson's 1976 sleeper, **LIPSTICK.**

Sarandon has always shown up over the years in a varied amount of surprising, challenging and unsuspected film roles. He's done comedy, horror, voice over animation work, all while maintaining a consistent and important career as a stage actor in the theater. From **FRIGHT NIGHT** to **THE PRINCESS BRIDE**, **BORDELLO OF BLOOD** and **THE OSTERMAN WEEKEND**, Sarandon has always proved a major, interesting and fun addition to the story on screen. He's a under-rated actor on a lot of fronts, and it's high time his story comes more into the foreground.

<p style="text-align: justify;"><iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/WsV9Mm1ISV0" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe></p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Chris, I read online that you grew up with parents that were in the restaurant business. I was just curious to see if working in a family business, do you learn anything or get some sort of subconscious preparation for being a career actor?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Yes, absolutely...I started working in their restaurant when I was nine years old. My parents started me out washing dishes, clearing tables, that sort of thing - then I graduated into a sort of glorified host and cashier, but I was basically doing everything there from age nine until I left for college.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">The restaurant was sort of kitty corner from the county courthouse. So we had a lot of people come in who were lawyers, judges, doctors, but also people that were there on trial or there representing people that were on trial. Also, it was a coal mining town. So we had a big cross section of different people coming in from the area.. I think I got a slice-of-life type of education from growing up in the restaurant, and experiencing all these different types of personalities. </p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">It was a great way to learn how to talk to people from all social avenues. My uncle used to tease me all the time, cause I wasn't very much for the business end. He'd tease me cause I'd spend more time talking to the customers than I would actually working. I guess that's why I'm in the business I'm in now....laughing</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So you grew being interested in music as well, right?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Sure...But I can't take any kind of credit for being a musician though. I was interested in jazz music first of all, cause I had an older cousin who was really into jazz music, and he was sort of my hero growing up, cause he had this cool MG sports car, and he listened to this really cool music. I thought he was the greatest guy around.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">So by the time I got to high school, music was changing and you were seeing rock n roll really taking off. I had been taking drummer lessons, cause I wanted to be a jazz drummer. Some

guys from a class I had approached me cause they were starting a band, and they needed a drummer. So we started practicing, playing Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry song and other early rock n roll songs, and we sorta became a cover band. So from like age 15 till the time I left for college, I was in this band.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">It was a sort of semi-show biz indoctrine for me, cause we were on stage 2 or 3 nights a week, backing up these musicians that would come into our West Virginia town.. I played with Bobby Darin, Danny and The Juniors and a whole other bunch of people when they came into town.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">It was a great experience. We even cut a record. We had a couple original songs that we had written, and the record kinda took off regionally, it was really great. I did that until I went to college and that was pretty much that.. It was really fun though, a while back we had a high school class reunion and we got back together and played the dance, we had a lot of fun with that.. It was great.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So where do you think your initial interest in being an actor comes from?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I have no idea....laughing I have to be frank. I've always had a very good ear. I sang in the church choir, and I sang in school. So I think I've always had a musical ear. That's a very good tool for an actor to have. I could always pick up accents easily. I could tell jokes. I could do characters. So I don't know. I was just a natural talent that I had, and it just always seemed like something that I fit in. It's all I've ever been able to think about doing.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: I know you're done your fair share of work on the stage as well as working in film? Do you find one is more rewarding than the other?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Working on stage is rewarding in a different way. Your performance can change every night, cause your audience changes every night. Even though you're doing the same play every night, it changes with your relationship with the audience. So it's really interesting that way.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">Now with movies, you're part of this huge machine. You somewhat have control over your performance, but on the other hand - it can be edited, cut and pasted, altered into an end product that wasn't your original intention necessarily. Basically, you have to go into it thinking that you're gonna have a good time, and that you're gonna get the opportunity to try things a bunch of different times and in different ways, then you have to move on. So it's exciting in that regard, and your challenge is to make

it interesting and fresh for the camera. So both are alot of fun, and I enjoy both of them extremely.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So how did you get cast for DOG DAY AFTERNOON?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I just auditioned. I went in and auditioned for Sydney Lumet, and Al Pacino was there. They asked me to come back again and make a couple adjustments, and I did, and they hired me. That's how it happened, it was basically through the audition.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Tom Holland told me when I interviewed him, that the whole reason he wanted you for FRIGHT NIGHT was because he loved you so much in DOG DAY AFTERNOON. What was your first meeting with TOM HOLLAND like?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Great. The meeting with Tom was amazing. They had sent me the script to FRIGHT NIGHT, and asked me if I would be interested. At the time I wasn't sure cause I had this idea of how my career should be going, and I wasn't sure if I should do a horror movie. But I read the script, and it was great. So I went in to meet with Tom and we started talking, and he literally described the entire movie shot for shot to me, exactly how he wanted to shoot it. So I said, "OK, when do we start?" Tom was a first time director, but he had this track record as a screen writer, so he obviously knew what he was doing, and we developed such a great working relationship. We did a couple other films together after FRIGHT NIGHT.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So, going back to DOG DAY AFTERNOON, where do you think 'Leon' comes from inside you?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I don't have any idea...laughing I guess on one level, I understood the character as an outsider. Growing up in West Virginia and being Greek, I was the only Greek kid in my school. I was a first generation kid with parents that came to the United States from Greece. They spoke Greek around the house, and my father had a very thick accent. So in many ways, I always felt like I was outside the environment, even though I was popular in school. There weren't exactly a lot of ethic kids growing up in rural West Virginia. When I was at home I was a Greek American, and my parents used to tell me that - I was 100% American and full blooded Greek.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">While this isn't a unique experience in the United States, it was a challenge to me to try to fit in on the one hand, and at the same time - to be who I was while at home. I was always proud of being Greek, but at the time I was wanting to be someone else.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">So I think I understood 'Leon', in terms of how he felt uncomfortable in his own skin. Also, I had friends in the gay community. I spent some time with a friend who had a dinner party one evening, and he invited some people in the trans-gender community over, and I got to talk to them for hours and listen to their back stories. That's what an actor does.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">I take credit only from the standpoint that I was a channel through whom the great screenwriter Frank Pearson and the director Sydney Lumet were speaking. Also, I had the advantage of having photographs of the real person, from which I was playing for the camera, plus I had the opportunity to listen to a couple taped interviews with him, but I never got the chance to meet him.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So a little off topic, but with your family background today are you a good cook?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">I've always had an interest in cooking, but I wanted to avoid the restaurant business cause I saw how difficult it was on my dad and my uncles. But, I've always enjoyed it. I enjoy baking bread and cookies. Growing up, I was always helping my mom in the kitchen, cause I had no sisters in the house, so that gave me the ability to take care of myself. It's a family thing, in fact my son now is going to culinary school to be a chef.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Skipping around and going back to DOG DAY AFTERNOON how gratifying was it for you, it's your first film and your nominated for an Academy Award?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">It was great. DOG DAY AFTERNOON is something I've always been very proud of. I loved doing the film, and it was just such a high for me, that whole process of being nominated and then going off to the Academy Awards.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So do you remember who you lost out to that night?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Of course...laughing Are you kidding? George Burns! He played 'God' in OH GOD. I was fine with it, I figured I lost out to god - what can you do?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;"><iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/75LQKUF9wC0" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe></p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Onto your next film, LIPSTICK. I was just curious to see if you had any reservations in getting involved with the project given that you knew in advance when you read the script what you would have to do as that character?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Actually, I thought the opposite. I thought it was a great way to go in the other direction if you will...going from a would be transsexual to a rapist...laughing</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">Also, the group of people involved in the film was amazing. Anne Bancroft was in the film and the director Mark Johnson had a great reputation as a director. I thought it was subject matter that was very timely. It was at a time when women that were raped were not treated kindly by the justice system. They were treated as if they were somehow complacent in the rape, which I'm sure is still happening in other countries even though the laws have changed in this country through selective reality. Also, it was a study of what rape is really about - power and male dominance. I felt very strongly that it was an important project that I wanted to be involved with.</p>

<iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/-PGFobWblA8" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe>

<p style="text-align: justify;"> MONDO: So what about THE OSTERMAN WEEKEND?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I was asked to come in and meet Sam Peckinpah. I went in, and we talked together for ten minutes and he hired me right there. I think that's the only time in my life that's ever happened.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So what was it like working with Peckinpah on the film? </p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: He was

very gracious and just a lovely guy. By THE OSTERMAN WEEKEND, Peckinpah was in somewhat frail health. He had a pace maker for a heart condition. He was not the sort of rip snorting crazy cowboy that his reputation indicated him to be. He was to me, a very straight forward gentlemen with a great sense of humor. I had a great time on that movie.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;"><iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/5arsB-T0qMw" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe></p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Going into FRIGHT NIGHT, what was the process for you in terms of approaching the 'Jerry Dandrige' character, how do you prepare?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Tom, from the very beginning was very insistent in our being very grounded in terms of the characters behavior and life as we could be. He asked us all to write out biographies for the characters, we did rehearsals. He approached it in such a serious way that it was very respectful to our process as actors. Because of that, we brought to the genre and film a real humanity to those characters.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Didn't you have some creative input into the 'Jerry Dandrige' character?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Along the way if you had any ideas for the character, you could always bring them to Tom, and he'd incorporate them if they made sense. Most bats, are not vampire bats, but fruit bats. So I had an "what if" idea that in Jerry's genetic vampire line there was this genetic craving to eat fruit. So I took that to Tom, and he said, "Great, let's work that in."</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">Also, with that whole bit where Jerry takes the bite out of the apple outside, and rolls it on the ground toward Charlie Brewster who's spying on him in the bushes. Tom really liked that, and took the idea and expanded on it, and got these great shots of it, that you see in the film now. So Tom and I worked in a very collaborative way in a lot of respects.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So how do you feel about Colin Farrell in the 'Jerry Dandrige' character role for the FRIGHT NIGHT remake?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I think it's great. I had the chance to talk to him before they started shooting the remake. He is actually a huge fan of the original. He told me that he grew up watching the film with his sister. He was very humble and respectful. He told me he was reluctant to take the character on, cause he felt that it was such an iconic role, and that the movie meant a lot to him. He also told me that it meant so much to him, that it was something he had to do. I told him to go for it, and have fun doing it.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;"><iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/mgr-1uljRUQ" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe></p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So how did you get involved or cast in THE PRINCESS BRIDE?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON : That was just an audition. I went in to audition for it with Rob Reiner and the writer William Goldman.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So how do you approach a comic role like that?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Very seriously. Comedy is serious. When you watch the movie, what's endearing in the film is that the characters are deadly serious about their objectives, and what they have to deal with. The humor in the film comes from the situations and the wonderful William Goldman dialogue.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Working on THE PRINCESS BRIDE, did you spent a lot of time off set with Andre The Giant?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Yes I did actually. We were all on location in England for six weeks. So we were all in the same hotel in this little town, we all ate dinner together every night, we hung out together. Andre was one of the sweetest human beings I ever met.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;"><iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/MPQ_64vfFA8" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe></p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: What attracted you to the character 'Charles Dexter Ward' in the Dan O'Bannon film THE RESSURECTED?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Well, I was just offered it. I read the script and thought it was very interesting. I knew

Dan's work and I wanted to be part of it.

MONDO: So were the dual roles required of you a challenge?

SARANDON: Yes, it is but it isn't.. Again, you approach it very seriously, and try to bring as much to it as you can. I tried to do as much historical research of the times as I could. Then you sorta have to go with the conceit of it. The idea of someone resurrecting life in a very macabre way. As long as you stay true to the reality of the characters, you'll hope that you can do right by it.

<iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/I6WQjVNIQ5M" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe>

MONDO: How did you get involved in THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS?

SARANDON: They were looking for somebody that was a good vocal match for Danny Elfman, cause he was doing Jack's singing voice. So i guess I was a close enough match, and I guess they liked what they heard in the audition and I was hired.

MONDO: So, for you how different or new was it to have to focus on working more with your voice than with your physical body for THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS?

SARANDON: Well, I had done little bits and pieces of animated voice work prior. But this was obviously the first feature role I'd had done in animation. I guess I'd say the challenge was not working with other actors for the most part. I'd fly up to San Francisco from Los Angeles and I'd go into the studio with the director Henry Sellick and I'd spend the better part of the day laying down the tracks for one or two scenes then I'd go home and they'd start the animation, and then I'd come back a few months later for more. We did that for the better part of a year and a half.

MONDO: Going into a project like THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS, did you ever have any thoughts that what you were doing would be something that would turn out to be very special?

SARANDON: I only

knew that the end result was going to be pretty amazing visually. Cause I had seen the story boards, and I also saw the sets that they were shooting on as well as the animatronic renderings of the characters that were used for the stop motion process. I saw all that, and I thought it was just amazing. So when I saw the final result, I was just blown away.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Onto a personal favorite of mine...TALES FROM THE CRYPT: BORDELLO OF BLOOD. Cult classic or just a bad idea?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I'll have to leave it to others to decide if it's a cult classic or not. I will tell you that I had a fun time doing it. I liked the guys who produced and directed it. I have fun working with the other members of the cast. We had a fun time making it. Also, it was a fun character for me. Growing up in West Virginia, my parents would go on vacation and leave me with a babysitter. She was this women that would take me to these pentecostal holy roller church services. So I knew this character, I had seen him before as a kid. You would see these televangelist's, and you realize that they are these great performers and remarkable communicators.. So this character was a lot of fun for me. I had a good time getting into that mode.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;"><iframe title="YouTube video player" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/c1rL_OH_MAc" frameborder="0" width="585" height="350"></iframe></p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So the accent you use in the performance, must have been pretty easy for you, considering where you grew up. Was that something you ever had trouble getting rid of?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Right, the accent is from my home town. Neither of my parents had the accent. I had it a bit, but as soon as I left home it was gone.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Are you a big movie fan? Do you a favorite film?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Yes, and there are so many favorites. I could give you fifty movies that are on my list as the greatest movies of all time. I love David Lean. LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, GREAT EXPECTATIONS. I'm a big fan of Howard Hawks and Billy Wilder. I love TOOTSIE. Silent movies. Fellini. Steven Spielberg. RAISE THE RED LANTERN is a favorite. I could go on and on.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: With a love of directors, have you ever had any aspirations to direct a film yourself?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I sort of did at one time. I produced a movie that a friend of mine and I put together, and I was in it as well. It was called ROAD ENDS. It went straight to cable television. I'm happy were I am at this point. But if an opportunity arose...sure I'd love to direct. But I'm not pining over it.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: Of all the great performances you've turned in over the years, do you perhaps have a favorite one or maybe one that you're the most proud of?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Not really. The last one...laughing</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So we've just talked a lot of about some well known movies. Are there any performances that you've done that you don't get asked about in an interview, but wish you would be asked about?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: Not really. The ones that are out there, that are remembered - people are big fans of. Those are the ones that I am most proud of. The ones that I'd just as soon forget about, have been forgotten. History has a way of making judgement's about things that you weren't sure of when you did them.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: What are you working on now?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: I'm just finishing filming a movie called, SAFE. It's with Jason Statham and I play a corrupt mayor. Then after this, I look forward to the next one.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">MONDO: So what's one thing that no-one knows about you?</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">SARANDON: If they don't know, I'd rather they didn't...laughing I'm not trying to be coy or difficult so I'll tell you why. I think these days people know too much about actors. There was a time when actor's private lives were kept very private. We've entered into a period with reality television, and major celebrity worship. So actors have become public figures because of their work and even more because of their

lives.</p>

<p style="text-align: justify;">So in a way, I'm glad that I didn't become so famous, that I'm followed around all the time. I'm happy that I keep working and that I don't have people prying into my private life. For that I'm grateful. In that respect, I'm glad that people know what they know and that be it.</p>

